

7. MICROBUSINESS GRANT SCHEMES

REPORT OF: Programme Manager, Burgess Hill Growth Area
Contact Officer: Rachel Ryan-Crisp
Email rachel.crisp@midsussex.gov.uk **Tel:** 01444 477593
Wards Affected: All
Key Decision No

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to present ten microbusiness grant applications for consideration by the Cabinet Grants Panel and seek the Panel's agreement to rescind an award made in January.

Summary

2. A summary of the applications to be considered and the recommendations from the Grants Assessment Group on the level of financial assistance to be awarded to each organisation are detailed as follows:

Organisation	Purpose for which award is sought	Award Requested	Award Suggested
Insideout Home and Garden Improvements	Website relaunch and new marketing push	£2,000	£2,000
Premier Marketing	Apprentice	£1,500	£1,500
RT Architectural Services	Website revamp	£550	£550
Paper Plus	Create online and social media presence	£2,000	£2,000
Aquapax	Online presence and digital marketing	£2,000	£2,000
See-Me-Go	Specialist equipment	£1,500	£1,500
Sussex Pages	Secure a local PR agency	£1,000	£1,000
Beautiful	Computerise booking and client records system	£2,000	£2,000
The Horse Drawn Carriage Company	Purchase of a horse-drawn hearse	£2,000	£2,000
Raising the Barre	Purchase of additional equipment, website build and marketing drive	£2,000	£2,000
Total		£16,550	£16,550

NB – the suggested award is based in the assumption that due diligence checks have been satisfactorily passed. This will be confirmed, or otherwise, at the Cabinet Grants Panel meeting.

3. The grant to be considered for rescinding is that of £2000 awarded to Words Guy in January for the launch of a new community magazine in Haywards Heath.

Recommendations

Members of the Panel are requested to

- a) consider and decide upon the recommendations for each of the above applications, summaries of which are attached in Appendix A of this report.***
- b) consider and decide whether to rescind the grant awarded to Words Guy on the grounds of the arguments set out below***

Background

4. In the first two months of the programme, eleven applications in total were considered by the Cabinet Grants Panel and all were awarded the full amount. This month sees a step change in the level of interest.
5. The grant awarded to Words Guy at the January Panel was £2000 to assist with the launch of a new community magazine in Haywards Heath. Words Guy have subsequently approached the Council and informed us that the project has now stalled until October/November this year so the money will not be required until then.

Assessment and Policy Context

6. The applications received have been considered by Council Officers Rachel Ryan-Crisp and Gordon Reay. A summary of the assessment of each application is included within the individual project reports in Appendix A
7. All organisations have met the basic criteria and specific grant criteria, i.e. are properly constituted micro-businesses and have provided the relevant information to support their application. As noted above, a verbal confirmation of the due diligence checks will be provided at the Cabinet Grants Panel.
8. The grant funding provided by WSCC is required to be spent by September this year and therefore a project, such as Words Guy's, that will only come to fruition in October/November are outside the timeframe for the scheme. If, as previously discussed, the Council decides to top-up the fund then the timeframes might be more relaxed. Nevertheless, as the purpose of the fund is to support the growth of microbusinesses through providing assistance with projects, it seems counter-intuitive to allow an organisation to sit on a tranche of funding, particularly when there is no guarantee that the project will go-ahead at that time.

Financial Implications

9. The microbusiness grants are funded through an allocation from the WSCC business rates pool, with £500,000 to be divided equally between districts.
10. The current fund stands at:

Scheme	Original fund	Funds approved	Funds requested	Balance
Microbusiness grant	£71,400	£20,859	£16,550	£33,991

Risk Management Implications

11. The main associated risk to the successful implementation of the decisions arising from this report is the inability of the funded organisations to carry out the services, activities or equipment purchase for which funding had been awarded.
12. To minimise this risk we have requested that recipient businesses provide proof of purchase of equipment or employment of the apprentice. We consider this a proportionate approach given the relatively small sums involved in this grant programme.

Equality implications

13. As part of the due diligence process all of the organisations for this funding from the Council have been assessed to be in compliance with the requisite policies/legislation.

Legal Implications

14. The Council is not obliged to provide grant funding, but by virtue of section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, it is able to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of its area. This includes the incurring of expenditure, giving financial assistance to any person (or organisation) and entering into arrangements or agreements with any person.

Background Papers

15. Grant applications and associated documentation for the Microbusiness Grant Programme are held in the Burgess Hill Programme Management team.